

I've told the leadership that they should be expecting a strong education reform package, a tax relief package, and a Medicare and Social Security reform package and a package to help pay the folks in the military more money. And I can't wait to work with them to get the people's business done.

This is not the last time I'm going to see you all over here, nor will the meetings be only Republican; we'll have Democrats come here quite a few times, as well, to get some things done.

So I want to thank you all for coming. I'm honored you're here. It's my first lunch in this part of the White House complex, and it's fitting that it be with Members of the legislative branch. Thanks for coming.

Abortion Funding

Q. Mr. President, are you going to reverse the Executive order allowing abortion funding and counseling—Federal funds for abortion counseling and funding overseas?

The President. Yes, I am.

Q. When will you do that, sir?

The President. Soon.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—Executive orders reversing President Clinton's?

The President. Yes.

Fetal Tissue Research

Q. What about fetal tissue research? What about fetal tissue research?

The President. I'll deal with that issue later.

Resolution of President Clinton's Legal Issues

Q. Mr. President, how do you react to the deal that President Clinton entered into with the Independent Counsel, Robert Ray? What's your interpretation of that agreement, and were you considering a pardon should it have come to that?

The President. I hadn't considered a pardon because the man hadn't been indicted. And my feeling about the actions of last Friday was, it's finally over with; it's now time to move on. And I think the country is pleased that it's time to move on, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Q. Was it appropriate, sir?

The President. Thank you all. The pleasure is mine, Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press]. [*Laughter*]

Q. Welcome to the White House.

The President. It's an honor to be here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reading Roundtable January 22, 2001

Laura and I have been honored to host a discussion on an incredibly important subject, and that's education and reading. I really appreciate the Secretary of Education for coming, Dr. Rod Paige; and for educators, leaders, from all around the country who've come here to the Roosevelt Room.

Phyllis Hunter coined a phrase that I quote a lot, and that is, "Reading is the new civil right." It's the cornerstone of hope and opportunity in America, and we're going to make sure every child has the opportunity to learn to read. That means we're going to have scientific-based knowledge be the cornerstone of our curriculum. And that's why I appreciate Reid Lyon and others, experts in the field of reading, for being here to help make sure our curriculum reflect that which works.

We're going to diagnose children early and correct problems when we find them. As importantly, I'm going to ask Congress to spend money on teacher training, to make sure that our teachers, the heart and soul of the education system, have got the tools necessary to teach children to read.

I'm excited about working with the pros in the field of education. This is not a Republican issue; it's not a Democrat issue; it's not an independent issue; this is an American issue, and the most fundamental of all American issues. If the mission is to make sure the American experience touches every willing heart, every person in the country, it starts with making sure our children learn to read, and it starts with making sure children learn to read early. And one of the key initiatives that we have been discussing is, how do we make sure that we get science-

based reading instruction to the youngest of the young? One way is to make sure that Head Start has a reading component as a part of its overall mission.

So I want to thank you all for coming. This is a week where I'm going to, hopefully, focus the Nation's attention on public schools and how the Congress and the executive branch can work together to pass law and appropriate money that will enable Dr. Paige and myself to work on the noblest of all missions, that every single child be educated in America, and not one—I mean not one—be left behind.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:49 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Roderick R. Paige; G. Reid Lyon, chief, Child Development Branch, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development; and Phyllis Hunter, consultant, Texas Reading Initiative.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Democratic Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters *January 22, 2001*

Legislative Agenda on Education

The President. Thank you all for coming this afternoon. I've had the honor of hosting a group of distinguished folks who have had experience with Government here, that happen to be of the Democrat persuasion. We had a discussion about—an advisory session about what to think about in Washington, about how to move issues such as education. We've spent a lot of time talking about education and how to get an education agenda moving forward in this important town.

I can't thank the former Senators and a man who has seen enough klieg lights in his day to know what they're all about, and of course, the Ambassador and Bill Gray, the distinguished chairman of the United Negro College Fund for being here. For me, it's been a very helpful discussion.

Ambassador Strauss said something that's really important and is so true. He reminded me that Democrats are just as patriotic about their country as Republicans, that there is good in everybody. And that's what I'm going to look for. This administration is going to

seek the good in everybody and find that ability to come together for the good of the country, as well.

So I want to thank these distinguished citizens of the country for being here, people who brought class and distinction when they held power and set a good legacy for those of us who follow.

Thank you.

Mr. Ambassador, do you want to say something?

Former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Robert Strauss. I want to say, all of us are delighted to be here, and all of us are pleased that the President extended this invitation. I think that the group not only is appreciative, but they've tried to be responsible to the discussion.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, how do you square your decision—how do you square your decision, Mr. President to—

The President. I'm not sure. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to William Gray III, president, United Negro College Fund. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement to Participants in the March for Life

January 22, 2001

Good afternoon, friends and fellow citizens. Two days ago, Americans gathered on the Washington Mall to celebrate our Nation's ideals. Today, you are gathered to remind our country that one of those ideals is the infinite value of every life.

I deeply appreciate your message and your work. You see the weak and defenseless, and you try to help them. You see the hardship of many young mothers and their unborn children, and you care for them both. In so many ways, you make our society more compassionate and welcoming.

We share a great goal: to work toward a day when every child is welcomed in life and protected in law. We know this will not come easily, or all at once. But the goal leads us onward: to build a culture of life, affirming